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President Bush

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Change in the Soviet Union

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Following is an address by President Bush at the Texas A&M University commencement ceremony, College Station, Texas, May 12, 1989.

My sincerest congratulations go to every graduate and to your parents. In this ceremony, we celebrate nothing less than the commencement of the rest, and the best, of your life.

When you look back to your days at Texas A&M, you will have a lot to be proud of—a university that is first in baseball and first in service to our nation. Many are the heroes whose names are called at Muster. Many are those you remember in Silver Taps.

We are reminded that no generation can escape history. Parents—we share a fervent desire for our children, and their children, to know a better world, a safer world. Students—your parents and grandparents have lived through a world war and helped America to rebuild the world. They witnessed the drama of postwar nations divided by Soviet subversion and force but sustained by an allied response most vividly seen in the Berlin airlift.

Containing Soviet Expansionism

Wise men—Truman and Eisenhower, Vandenberg and Rayburn—Marshall, Acheson, and Kennan—crafted the strategy of containment. They believed that the Soviet Union, denied the easy course of expansion, would turn inward and address the contradictions of its inefficient, repressive, and inhumane system. And they were right. The Soviet Union is now publicly facing this hard reality.

Containment worked. Containment worked because our democratic principles, institutions, and values are sound and always have been. It worked because our alliances were and are strong; and because the superiority of free societies and free markets over stagnant socialism is undeniable.

We are approaching the conclusion of a historic postwar struggle between two visions—one of tyranny and conflict, and one of democracy and freedom. The review of U.S.-Soviet relations that my Administration has just completed outlines a new path toward resolving this struggle.

Our goal is bold—more ambitious than any of my predecessors might have thought possible. Our review indicates that 40 years of perseverance have brought us a precious opportunity. Now it is time to move beyond containment, to a new policy for the 1990s—one that recognizes the full scope of change taking place around the world and in the Soviet Union itself.

In sum, the United States now has as its goal much more than simply containing Soviet expansionism—we seek the integration of the Soviet Union into the community of nations. As the Soviet Union moves toward greater openness and democratization—as they meet the challenge of responsible international behavior—we will match their steps with steps of our own. Ultimately, our objective is to welcome the Soviet Union back into the world order.

Looking for Signs of Soviet Change

The Soviet Union says it seeks to make peace with the world and criticizes its own postwar policies. These are words we can only applaud. But a new relationship cannot be simply declared by Moscow or bestowed by others. It must be earned. It must be earned because promises are never enough. The Soviet Union has promised a more cooperative relationship before—only to reverse course and return to militarism. Soviet foreign policy has been almost seasonal—warmth before cold, thaw before freeze. We seek a friendship that knows no season of suspicion, no chill of distrust.

We hope *perestroika* is pointing the Soviet Union to a break with the cycles of the past—a definitive break. Who would have thought we would see the deliberations of the Central Committee on the front page of *Pravda*, or dissident Andrey Sakharov seated near the councils of power? Who would have imagined a Soviet leader who canvasses the sidewalks of Moscow and Washington, D.C.? These are hopeful—indeed, remarkable—signs. Let no one doubt our sincere desire to see *perestroika* continue and succeed. But the national security of America and our allies is not predicated on hope. It must be based on deeds. We look for enduring, ingrained economic and political change.

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While we hope to move beyond containment, we are only at the beginning of our new path. Many dangers and uncertainties are ahead. We must not forget that the Soviet Union has acquired awesome military capabilities. That was a fact of life for my predecessors. That has always been a fact of life for our allies. And that is a fact of life for me.

As we seek peace, we must also remain strong. The purpose of our military might is not to pressure a weak Soviet economy or to seek military superiority. It is to deter war. It is to defend ourselves and our allies and to do something more—to convince the Soviet Union that there can be no reward in pursuing expansionism—to convince the Soviet Union that reward lies in the pursuit of peace.

Positive Steps Toward an Open Society

Western policies must encourage the evolution of the Soviet Union toward an open society. This task will test our strength. It will tax our patience. And it will require a sweeping vision—let me share with you my vision. I see a Western Hemisphere of democratic, prosperous nations, no longer threatened by a Cuba or a Nicaragua armed by Moscow. I see a Soviet Union that pulls away from ties to terrorist nations—like Libya—that threaten the legitimate security of their neighbors. I see a Soviet Union which respects China's integrity and returns the Northern Territories of Japan—a prelude to the day when all the great nations of Asia will live in harmony.

But the fulfillment of this vision requires the Soviet Union to take positive steps, including:

First, reduce Soviet forces. Although some small steps have already been taken, the Warsaw Pact still possesses more than 30,000 tanks, more than twice as much artillery, and hundreds of thousands more troops in Europe than NATO. They should cut their forces to less threatening levels in proportion to their legitimate security needs.

Second, adhere to the Soviet obligation—promised in the final days of World War II—to support self-determination for all the nations of Eastern and Central Europe. This requires specific abandonment of the Brezhnev doctrine. One day it should be possible to drive from Moscow to Munich without seeing a single guard tower or a strand of barbed wire. In short, tear down the Iron Curtain.

Third, work with the West in positive, practical—not merely rhetorical—steps toward diplomatic solutions to regional disputes around the world. I welcome the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Angola agreement. But there is much more to be done around the world. We're ready. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Fourth, achieve a lasting political pluralism and respect for human rights. Dramatic events have already occurred in Moscow. We are impressed by limited, but freely contested, elections. We are impressed by a greater toleration of dissent. We are impressed by a new frankness about the Stalin era. Mr. Gorbachev, don't stop now.

Fifth, join with us in addressing pressing global problems, including the international drug menace and dangers to the environment. We can build a better world for our children.

Openness and Arms Control

As the Soviet Union moves toward arms reduction and reform, it will find willing partners in the West. We seek verifiable, stabilizing arms control and arms reduction agreements with the Soviet Union and its allies. However, arms control is not an end in itself but a means of contributing to the security of America and the peace of the world. I directed Secretary Baker to propose to the Soviets that we resume negotiations on strategic forces in June. And, as you know, the Soviets have agreed.

Our basic approach is clear. In the strategic arms reduction talks, we wish to reduce the risk of nuclear war. In the companion defense and space talks, our objective will be to preserve our options to deploy advanced defenses when they are ready. In nuclear testing, we will continue to seek the necessary verification improvements in existing treaties to permit them to be brought into force. We will continue to seek a verifiable global ban on chemical weapons. We support NATO efforts to reduce the Soviet offensive threat in the negotiations on conventional forces in Europe. And, as I've said, fundamental to all of these objectives is simple openness.

Make no mistake, a new breeze is blowing across the steppes and cities of the Soviet Union. Why not, then, let this spirit of openness grow, let more barriers come down. Open emigration, open debate, open airwaves—let openness come to mean the publication and sale of banned books and newspapers in the Soviet Union. Let the 19,000 Soviet Jews who emigrated last year be followed by any number who wish to emigrate this year. Let openness come to mean nothing less than the free exchange of people, books, and ideas between East and West. And let it come to mean one thing more.

Thirty-four years ago, President Eisenhower met in Geneva with Soviet leaders who, after the death of Stalin, promised a new approach toward the West. He proposed a plan called "Open Skies," which would allow unarmed aircraft from the United States and the Soviet Union to fly over the territory of the other country. This would open up military activities to regular scrutiny and, as President Eisenhower put it, "convince the world that we are . . . lessening danger and relaxing tension."

President Eisenhower's suggestion tested Soviet readiness to open their society. The Kremlin failed that test. Let us again explore that proposal, but on a broader, more intrusive and radical basis—one which I hope would include allies on both sides. We suggest that those countries that wish to examine this proposal meet soon to work out the necessary operational details, separately from other arms control negotiations. Such surveillance flights, complementing satellites, would provide regular scrutiny for both sides. Such unprecedented territorial access would show the world the meaning of the concept of openness. The very Soviet willingness to embrace such a concept would reveal their commitment to change.

Economic Relations

Where there is cooperation, there can be a broader economic relationship. But economic relations have been stifled by Soviet internal policies. They have been injured by Moscow's practice of using the cloak of commerce to steal technology from the West. Ending discriminatory treatment of U.S. firms would be a helpful step. Trade and financial transactions should take place on a normal commercial basis.

And should the Soviet Union codify its emigration laws in accord with international standards and implement its new laws faithfully, I am prepared to work with Congress for a temporary waiver of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, opening the way to extending most-favored-nation trade status to the Soviet Union. The policy I have just described has everything to do with you.

World Order of the Future

Today you graduate. You will start careers and families. And you will become the leaders of America in the next century. What kind of world will you know? Perhaps the world order of the future will truly be a family of nations.

It is a sad truth that nothing forces us to recognize our common humanity more swiftly than a natural disaster. I am thinking of Soviet Armenia, just a few months ago—a tragedy without blame, warlike devastation without war.

My son took our 12-year-old grandson to Yerevan. At the end of a day of comforting the injured and consoling the bereaved, father and son sat down together amid the ruins and wept. How can our two countries magnify this simple expression of caring? How can we each convey the good will of our people?

Forty-three years ago, a young lieutenant by the name of Albert Kotzebue, class of 1945 at Texas A&M, was the first American soldier to shake hands with the Soviets at the banks of the Elbe River. Once again, we are ready to extend our hand. Once again, we are ready for a hand in return. Once again, it is a time for peace.■

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